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## The third way in grammar instruction

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### Abstract

This empirical study of the types of grammar was conducted at the ELT Department of Çukurova University with 50 participants studying at preparatory classes. The dependent variable was the number of grammatical or correct items over the forms gained out of pre-test, post-test and delayed -post test. The Solomon four-group was adopted to provide the best control of the threats to internal validity within our research. T test and chi square analysis were used to analyze any significant difference between the treatment and the control groups. The results supported the fact that grammar teaching does really make a significant difference in L2 learning.

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**Keywords:** Implicit grammar teaching; explicit grammar teaching; efl learners.

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### 1. Introduction

The teaching of English grammar rests on ever-shifting foundation of theory and data about a) grammar, b) second language acquisition, and c) classroom teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching grammar. For scholars and teachers interested in grammar instruction, a discourse-based approach puts meaning and communication at the forefront and pulls grammar from the types of communication needed by students. Numerous SLA publications structure their observations and reports about the learning and teaching of English grammar around a selection of dichotomies: accuracy versus fluency, focus on form versus focus on forms, direct versus indirect (grammar) instruction. *Accuracy versus fluency*: in most uses, accuracy refers to grammatical accuracy but other areas of language use can be involved, too: spelling and pronunciation. Fluency implies the ability to easily understand and participate in communication, generally spoken, in the person's second language. *Function on form versus focus on forms*: Doughty and Williams (1998) provide the following definition of the phrase focus on form: Most researchers currently investigating the role of attention to form attribute the reawakening of interest in this issue to Michael

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Long (1988, 1991). In that seminal work, Long distinguished between a focus on forms, which characterizes earlier, synthetic approaches to language teaching that have as their primary organizing principle for course design the accumulation of individual language elements (e.g., forms such as verb endings or agreement features, or even functions such as greetings or apologies) from what he (and now we) call focus on form. The crucial distinction is that focus on form entails a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can be expected to be effective. Van Patten and his colleagues compared two instructional models, one in which input is practiced as a form of output manipulation (traditional grammar instruction in which information is presented to learners for practice) and the other in which an attempt is made to change the way input is perceived and processed (processing instruction). As Long (1991) stated, focus on form overtly draws students attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication. This is similar to what Sharwood Smith (1991, 1993) referred to as enhanced input that is, input can be enhanced by an external source (e.g. a teacher) or an internal source (learners relying on their own resources). The impact of pedagogy on language learners (LLs) has a variety of theories backed by research with differing findings (N. Ellis, 1994; R. Ellis, 1987; Krashen, 1981, 1982; Schwartz, 1993). This study tested some of those theories in actual L2 classrooms. Its findings are closely attuned to the much-debated grammar instruction category--often called form-focused instruction (FFI) with its divided camps of focus on form (sometimes called implicit instruction and using more inductive reasoning) and focus on forms (sometimes referred to as explicit and using more deductive reasoning) instruction (Ellis, 2001; Long, 1988, 1991). It attempted to add to the body of research seeking to find if one or the other is better for simple grammatical structures or for complex grammatical structures. It further sought to discover if the proficiency level of LLs has any effect on the outcome of the two instructional treatments over the two structures. It ultimately hopes that this theory-driven research--pedagogically applied and empirically conducted--will eventually better equip curriculum planners and classroom teachers to tailor their lessons with research-based confidence not theory-driven whims.

## **2. Methodology**

### *2.1. Participants*

The participants (N = 50) were intact groups of L2 learners ranging in age from 17 to 19. All of the students are from Turkey, and all the participants were enrolled in Cukurova ELT Department preparatory school.

### *2.2. Procedure*

To answer the research questions, a quantitative study was conducted over approximately 10 day period. There were three treatments covering one grammar structure conducted at the same proficiency level over the grammar forms. The number of correct items on the grammar test was the dependent variable. The pre-, post- and delayed-post tests used were uniform in number, kinds of items, and in the forms covered. Chi-square was applied to the correct-item counts to test for significance. For both methods, the grammar forms were purposefully chosen; the procedures were carefully followed; and the assessments were uniformly executed.

## 2.3. Data analysis

Table 1. Pretest results for the two groups (25 students in each group)

Pre-Test to Tests	Group A (explicit gr)		Group B(implicit gr)	
Item 1	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 6	19	F: 8	17
	‰: 24	76	‰: 32	68
Item 2	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 8	17	F: 10	15
	‰: 32	68	‰: 40	60
Item 3	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 6	24	F: 3	22
	‰: 19	76	‰: 12	88
Item 4	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 17	8	F: 19	5
	‰: 68	32	‰: 76	20
Item 5	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 21	4	F: 16	8
	‰: 84	16	‰: 64	32
Item 6	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 21	4	F: 17	8
	‰: 84	16	‰: 68	32
Item 7	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 19	6	F: 11	14
	‰: 76	24	‰: 44	56
Item 8	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 14	11	F: 8	17
	‰: 56	44	‰: 32	68
Item 9	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 9	36	F: 9	16
	‰: 16	64	‰: 36	64
Item 10	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 7	28	F: 8	17
	‰: 18	72	‰: 32	68

Table 2. Posttest results for two groups

Post-test to Tests	Group A		Group B	
Item 1	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 12	13	F: 17	8
	‰: 48	52	‰: 68	32
Item 2	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 15	10	F: 20	5
	‰: 60	40	‰: 80	20
Item 3	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 17	8	F: 25	
	‰: 68	32	‰: 100	

<b>Item 4</b>	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 17	8	F: 22	3
	%; 68	32	%; 88	12
<b>Item 5</b>	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 14	11	F: 15	10
	%; 56	44	%; 60	40
<b>Item 6</b>	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 18	7	F: 20	5
	%; 72	28	%; 80	20
<b>Item 7</b>	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 12	13	F: 17	8
	%; 48	42	%; 68	32
<b>Item 8</b>	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 14	11	F: 15	10
	%; 56	44	%; 60	40
<b>Item 9</b>	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 18	7	F: 18	7
	%; 72	28	%; 72	28
<b>Item 10</b>	C	IC	C	IC
	F: 14	11	F: 24	1
	%; 56	44	%; 96	4

For the Implicitly taught groups, the overall findings suggest that if adult language learners have sufficient opportunity to interact with the new learning, they have the cognitive ability to unconsciously analyze the material and transfer that learning to new experiences. They can somehow assimilate and correctly form the structures without explicit instruction of the rules. Since this group was not formally taught the rules, the findings indicate that they may have somehow learned them by interacting with the structures in the 'grammar-discovery' method.

For the Explicitly taught group, adults do use deductive reasoning; they can benefit from structural presentations; they often relate new information to their L1, and they may find deliberative teacher talk and written language forms helpful. Since this group received formal instruction of the rules, the findings indicate that they may have used this method as advanced organizers to subsequently learn the structures.

### 3. Conclusion

The findings show that there was a significant increase in learning grammar between the pre-test and the post-test during the course of the study. Therefore, the results of this study do support the SLA research that says intervention in the form of some grammar instruction is beneficial, (Brown, 2000; Doughty & Williams, 1981; Genesee, 2000; Sheen, 2003; Swain, 1995) and do not support the non-interventionist position. According to Fotos (2002), the success of implicit instruction depends on abundant communicative opportunities in class and much exposure outside of class. This exposure helps maintain awareness of the target form. One might conclude that implicit instruction would be more successful in the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classroom than in the English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) classroom. This study also agrees with Fotos since the implicit group had better performance than the explicit group of the study. Since this study dealt mainly with input, future research can include a different stage in the learning process, for example: feedback (from the teacher and/or from other experiences with the targeted forms.) Although significant, perhaps the total learning would have been even more significant--or maybe different--for both groups if out-of-class assignments were required. The assignments could be designed to follow the explicit/implicit nature of this study.

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